

Maharlika

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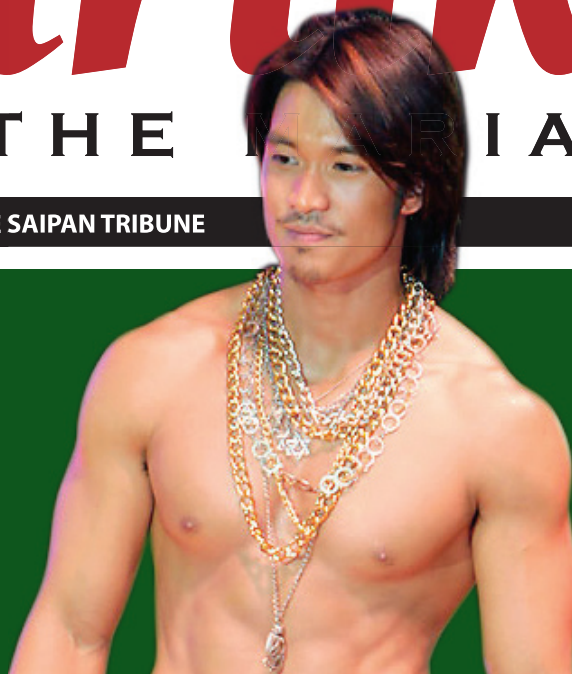
Saturday, March 31, 2007



Sacked

The Manila police chief and two of his officers will be removed from their posts in the fallout from a hostage standoff in which 26 children were held aboard a bus in the name of social reform.

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New Tele-Epic

Taking Pinoy viewers to greater heights this April is ABS-CBN's ambitious tele-epiko, "Rounin," with an all-star cast led by Diether Ocampo.

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On federalization: Some hopeful, some dismayed

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

After hearing the "uncertain" tone of the Department of the Interior, what do Filipinos now feel about federalization following a three-hour meeting with Office of Insular

Affairs deputy assistant secretary David B. Cohen Sunday?

"Some are dismayed, some remain hopeful," said Filipino group leaders Ramon Awit and Ed Reyes.

Dismayed because Cohen made no concrete assurances that federalization would come anytime soon, or if it is going to

come at all.

Some remain optimistic because "Cohen never said a definite no."

"Several people are happy that, for the first time, we had the dialogue with the Feds. That alone is a good thing. Cohen is not saying no," said Awit, president of the

ON FEDERALIZATION Page 2



Members of the Filipino community listen to Office of Insular Affairs deputy assistant secretary David B. Cohen during a consultation meeting at the Multi-Purpose Center on March 25.

A helping hand from Rene Salud

Filipino fashion designer Rene Salud is back on island, this time to organize a fundraising fashion show for the Seventh Day Adventist Elementary School.

The show titled "Fashion Cares by Rene Salud" will take place in October 2007. It will feature a 100-piece collection ranging from formal attire to long gowns, as well as some wedding gowns.

"It should be a huge event. We are projecting the show will be the event of the year here on Saipan," said Salud, who has done fashion shows all over the United States, some countries in Europe, Japan, China, and other cities in Asia.

Salud's holiday collection will be put on parade by professional models, including a singer,

an actor and a beauty queen, from the Philippines. To join the pros on the runway are Saipan's own models, including past and present beauty queens.

A HELPING Page 2



Renowned Filipino fashion designer Rene Salud.

'AIDS count among OFWs remains low'

By MARCONI CALINDAS
REPORTER

The number of overseas Filipino workers who have contracted the deadly AIDS disease continues to be low, according to the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment.

Labor and Employment Secretary Arturo D. Brion said the vast majority of Filipino workers abroad are free from the

HIV/AIDS threat, thanks in large part to Filipino values, as well as government efforts to keep them aware of the threat and protect them through quality employment, proper working conditions, and medical testing and orientation, particularly among documented OFWs.

However, he said this news is not reason to be complacent. Brion said the government is

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PINOYNEWS

80% of OFW families now middle- and high-income

MANILA—Nearly four in five Philippine families that benefit from money remittances from overseas Filipino workers are now middle- and high-income families, which suggests that more funds may be flowing toward saving and investment than toward consumption, the International Monetary Fund said.

The linkage between OFW remittances and investments in the Philippines remains weak, but that may change in the future, the IMF said in a March

2007 country report.

“In the Philippines, the investment ratio has steadily declined since the Asian crisis, thus it is clear that the increase in remittances has not increased investment thus far,” the report said.

In 1991, it said, nearly 60 percent of families in the Philippines that considered their main income source as coming from abroad came from the bottom two quartiles (referring to four equal groups into which a population can be divided) based on income distribution.

“By 2003, this share had dropped to just under 18 percent, implying that the share of families in the top two brackets counting income abroad as their main source of income rose from 40 percent to 82 percent,” it said.

“The most likely interpretation of this fact is that the skill set of remitters has shifted exogenously and there are both ‘pull’ and ‘push’ factors taking higher-skilled workers abroad,” the IMF said.

According to the Family Incomes and Expenditures Sur-

veys by the National Statistics Office, the bottom two quartiles or brackets are defined as those having incomes under P50,000 and P100,000, respectively. The third quartile has income between P100,000 and P250,000, and the top bracket has income over P250,000.

“Given that some 80 percent of families that receive income from abroad as their main source are now middle- and high-income families, it is much more likely now than in 1991 that the uses for this income go beyond

consumption and subsistence, and are put toward saving and investment,” the IMF said.

“This suggests that the lack of a relationship between investment and remittances could indeed be transitory, and that going forward, one may see a pickup in investment in physical capital,” it said.

Citing earlier international studies, the IMF said countries where economic returns to investment were low, or the private appropriability of those returns may be poor (due to high taxes or corrup-

tion, for example) may tend to see a rise in remittances go toward increased consumption, housing, and/or capital flight.

On the other hand, those studies also indicated that countries where the primary problem was due to poor financial intermediation, causing access to capital to be limited (even though there may be plenty of productive uses for it), and the cost of finance to be prohibitive, were likely to see increased investment from a rise in external inflows. (*Inquirer*)

ON FEDERALIZATION

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United Filipino Organization.

He said the dialogue also clarified one very important issue relating to money collection for improved status.

“The public is informed now that there’s no need to pay a group to get improved status. They made that very clear,” said Awit.

Reyes, who is co-chair of UFO, said both Cohen and federal ombudsman Jim Benedetto emphasized that no particular group knows more about the proposed federalization than the federal government itself.

“It was clear that there should be no fee involved here. You don’t have to pay someone to lobby for federalization. If it comes, it comes. I

think that’s the prevailing sentiment now,” said Reyes.

He said some Filipinos were disappointed due to the lack of assurance from the federal government, but they also understand the process involved.

“Mr. Cohen was very good in explaining the issue. He said that it cannot just happen anytime. It’s disappointing to some but they understand the issue better now,” said Reyes.

He said members of the Filipino community were especially grateful that Cohen made efforts to gather information from them.

“Just before the dialogue, people were losing hope but they’re happy to see Cohen get their concerns. It means that something is being done,” he said, adding that Filipinos are giving it “another try to hope.”

Cohen personally responded to individual questions raised

by some members of the audience, who lined up to tell him their stories and to ask him to consider their situation when the Interior drafts the immigration federalization bill.

At one point, Cohen also conducted an informal poll of the audience, asking them to raise their hands in response to questions how long they’ve been staying in the CNMI, who among them has children here, and who has plans of staying on even if the CNMI is federalized, among others. OIA field representative Jeff Schorr helped Cohen get an estimate on the number of responses.

UFO’s Reyes said the Filipino community is thankful that they were consulted at all on this issue.

“This is the first time we were consulted on federalization. Before, it’s only talks. If this dialogue [with Cohen]

ends up in nothing, then it’s over. This is the last card, so to speak. If nothing comes out of it, nothing would ever happen here. No more hope at all after this,” said Reyes.

About 300 Filipinos attended the dialogue with Cohen last Sunday, which was held at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.

Many of them who failed to get inside the center watched the dialogue on TV outside the building. They could still be seen by Cohen through the glass wall.

Through out the dialogue, Cohen repeatedly said there is no certainty on federalization.

“Things can happen which will speed things up and things that happen that slow things down. And it is impossible to predict,” he said.

Cohen emphasized to the Filipino community that anybody who would come to them and suggest he or she knows what is going to happen “is not telling you the truth.”

“I know it is very hard and we will work hard to get a resolution of all these issues because it is very important. It is important for you. We will do our best, but at this point that’s the best that I could do,” he said.

Cohen said the important message for everybody is: There

are no definitive answers to the questions yet.

“So unfortunately we are going to have to live with a lot of these uncertainties and be patient with the process as it unfolds,” he noted.

Cohen is tasked by the U.S. Senate to draft a CNMI immigration bill.

Meantime, the U.S. House subcommittee on insular affairs has set a public hearing on the CNMI on April 19 in Washington D.C.

On April 5, three staffers from that subcommittee are expected to arrive on Saipan to consult with local authorities on the same issue.

AIDS

FROM PAGE 1

stepping up efforts to protect OFWs from HIV/AIDS through greater awareness, encouragement on proper lifestyles, and sustained cooperation with both local and international stakeholders to prevent the menace from spreading.

“At all times, we encourage all OFWs and would-be OFWs to be aware against the threat, to practice proper lifestyles, values and personal discipline and responsibility as the first line of defense, as well as to avail continually of the counseling, medical, and orientation services available,” he said.

Counseling, orientation, and mandatory medical testing for OFWs have helped protect them from such a threat here in the Commonwealth.

Before an OFW comes to the CNMI, he or she has to undergo thorough medical examination in Manila that includes HIV examination.

For instance, Brion said that

Filipino seafarers, who comprise 26 percent of all global shipping manpower, are required to undergo stringent mandatory medical testing prior to boarding ships.

DOLE and key United Nations agencies are now moving to come up with a new three-year joint program that would strengthen the country’s anti-HIV AIDS thrusts, particularly on the overseas front.

The UN estimates the number of people in the world suffering from HIV/AIDS at 39.5 million.

In the Philippines, the national AIDS registry record from 1984 to early 2007 indicated 962 “seropositive” cases involving OFWs, or 35 percent of 2,742 HIV AIDS cases.

Nonetheless, Brion emphasized that despite the relatively low numbers, the threat of HIV and AIDS persists, and such threat must be effectively addressed, and, if possible, contained and eliminated.

He said that DOLE, through its Philippine Overseas Employment Administration,

Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, and Occupational Safety and Health Center would be actively pursuing the new joint program in cooperation with the UN.

Brion said the DOLE-UN cooperation would strengthen the country’s institutional capacities on HIV/AIDS prevention efforts for OFWs in policy development and advocacy; prevention, treatment, care, and support services; as well as capacity building of government and private agencies working with OFWs.

The initiative will further strengthen DOLE’s efforts to protect OFWs and their families from AIDS in light of the new joint program projected to involve 25 major licensed recruitment or manning agencies; 30 training institutions; and other concerned sectors.

DOLE will also collaborate with Department of Health by intensifying national and institutional coordination to scale up and sustain HIV prevention programs on the global migration area.

thoughts about accepting the invitation to be part of this show,” he said.

Salud had a chance to meet the SDA students during a visit to the school yesterday. He shared his rags-to-riches life story and gave the young children a brief demonstration of how to design clothes.

In related news, Salud yesterday said he wanted the local community notified that he had nothing to do with a modeling contest that carried his name last year. He said the project started out with his permission, but he backed out of it after his agreement with the local organizer broke down. (*Agnes E. Donato*)

A HELPING

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According to Salud, proceeds of the fashion show will be used for the construction of a new SDA school building.

“This is a good cause. That’s why I didn’t have any second

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LABOR FRONT

Information needed in filing an EEOC complaint

By **FERDIE P. DE LA TORRE**
REPORTER

Q: What information should be included if an alien worker files a discrimination complaint before the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission?

A: The complaining alien worker should put his or her name, address, and telephone number. He or she should write the name, address, and telephone number of the respondent employer or employment agency that is alleged to have discriminated. The complainant should also indicate the number of his or her employer's employees, if known.

According to EEOC, a complainant must provide a short description of the alleged violation or the event that caused him or her to believe that his or her rights were violated. The date(s) of the alleged violation(s) should also be specified.

■ ■ ■

Q: Can a U.S. citizen employed outside the U.S. or its territories by a U.S.-based companies file a discrimination complaint before EEOC?

A: Yes. U.S.-based companies that employ U.S. citizens outside the U.S. or its territories are covered under Equal Employment Opportunity laws, with certain exceptions.

An individual complaining of an Equal Employment Opportunity violation outside the U.S. should file a charge with the district office closest to his or her employer's headquarters. If the complainant is unsure where to file, he or she may submit the complaint with any EEOC office.

■ ■ ■

Q: What are the federal laws prohibiting job discrimination?

A: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, Title I and Title V of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Sections 501 and 505 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Civil Rights Act of 1991.

Submit questions on labor issues to *Saipan Tribune* via e-mail at editor@saipantribune.com, or by calling 235-6397, 235-2440, or 235-8747 and leaving a message at Ext. 133 or 135. You may also submit questions in person by writing it down and dropping it off at the *Saipan Tribune's* office on the second floor of the CIC Centre on Beach Road, Garapan.

Sheila Coronel hosts PBS report on media murders

By **SYLVIA L. MAYUGA**
INQUIRER.NET

MANILA—Sheila S. Coronel, director of Columbia University's Toni Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, hosts "Requiem," a powerful video report on journalists murdered worldwide, by the US Public Broadcasting System (PBS). It was aired last Tuesday in the US and made available on the Internet late Thursday, Eastern Time.

"Frontline is a long-running, award-winning program for PBS," Coronel said in an e-mail interview. "This essay is part of News Wars, a four-part examination of the media. The first three dealt with US media (Judith Miller case, etc.). The last one was on Al-Jazeera and then Requiem."

Coronel, founding director of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism and a new board member of the international Committee to Protect Journalists, is in America at a time of "great debate on the news media here... They wanted to expand the discussion to look at global media, and also to remind viewers that despite all the faults of the press, journalists do good and necessary work and that they were also at the receiv-

ing end of violent attacks."

Frontline editors introduce Requiem on their website: "At a time when fair and accurate news coverage is more essential than ever, 2006 marked one of the deadliest years on record for journalists. Surprisingly, despite the fierce fighting in Iraq, most of the slain journalists did not die in combat. They were deliberately targeted, hunted down, and murdered for investigating corruption, crime, or human rights abuses in countries around the world.

"In Requiem, FRONTLINE/World essayist Sheila Coronel looks at the dangers journalists confront as they try to tell their stories, and pays special tribute to reporters working in the Philippines, Russia, Turkey, Zimbabwe, China and Iraq who have been killed, jailed, or exiled for daring to speak truth to power."

Requiem begins with media suppression in the Marcos regime. The Filipino touch continues with Coronel's director, Margarita Dragon, another Filipina. Dragon "used to work with Jessica Soho's i-witness and is now a producer for Rain Media, an independent production house that does work for Frontline," Coronel said.

Need tax assistance? Mificpa to the rescue

By **MARCONI CALINDAS**
REPORTER

Good news to Filipino workers having trouble with their Income Tax Returns: The Marianas Institute of Filipino Certified Public Accountants will be holding a two-weekend community service project to help OFWs with their Individual Income Tax Returns.

MIFICPA public relations officer Robert Reyes told *Saipan*

Tribune yesterday that the community service is free to help Filipino workers prepare their ITRs, which are due for filing next month. The ITRs are due to be filed on or before April 17 at the Division of Revenue and Taxation.

Reyes said they are encouraging Filipinos to drop by the Filipino Resource Center of the Philippine Overseas Labor Office inside the Marianas Business Plaza (former Nauru

Building) in Susupe if they want help in preparing their tax returns.

The activity is scheduled for two Sundays: tomorrow and on April 8, from 1pm to 6pm only.

Reyes said the group has been conducting this free assistance to the Filipino community every year.

"We are doing this to help the OFWs in the CNMI who have difficulty computing their income tax," he said.

Through this, Filipino workers will have a clearer understanding of their income tax.

Reyes, however, clarified that the assistance is strictly for the "Individual Income Tax Return – Form 1040-EZ" only. He said this form is for those OFWs that do not have dependents on their record.

He also said that the assistance is not open to OFWs whose other income includes gambling winnings.

Lone Asian faculty member in London classroom is Pinoy

By **VOLT CONTRERAS**
INQUIRER

LONDON—A few fateful clicks on "Google" when he was still based in Tarlac City eventually led this school teacher to a classroom just behind the British Parliament and a few minutes away from the fascinating London Eye.

For the last five years, Edison Peña David has been the lone Asian faculty member in Vauxhall, a public primary school catering to pupils aged 3 to 11, where he has shown with relative ease and flair that an educator's passion knows no cultural differences.

Primarily a math teacher among the other hats he wears on campus, 33-year-old David adheres to some seemingly simple, "universal" approaches to handling kids in any classroom in the world.

"Rather than scold them or emphasize their misbehavior, I always try 'catching' them whenever they behave or perform well. I believe more in giving incentives than penalties," he said in an interview with the *Inquirer*.

Clarity of purpose

"You can treat them as adults by showing that you apply your rules consistently, but remember that children love to explore and test boundaries," he said.

"I always remind them that they are in charge of themselves and that they ultimately make choices between right and wrong."

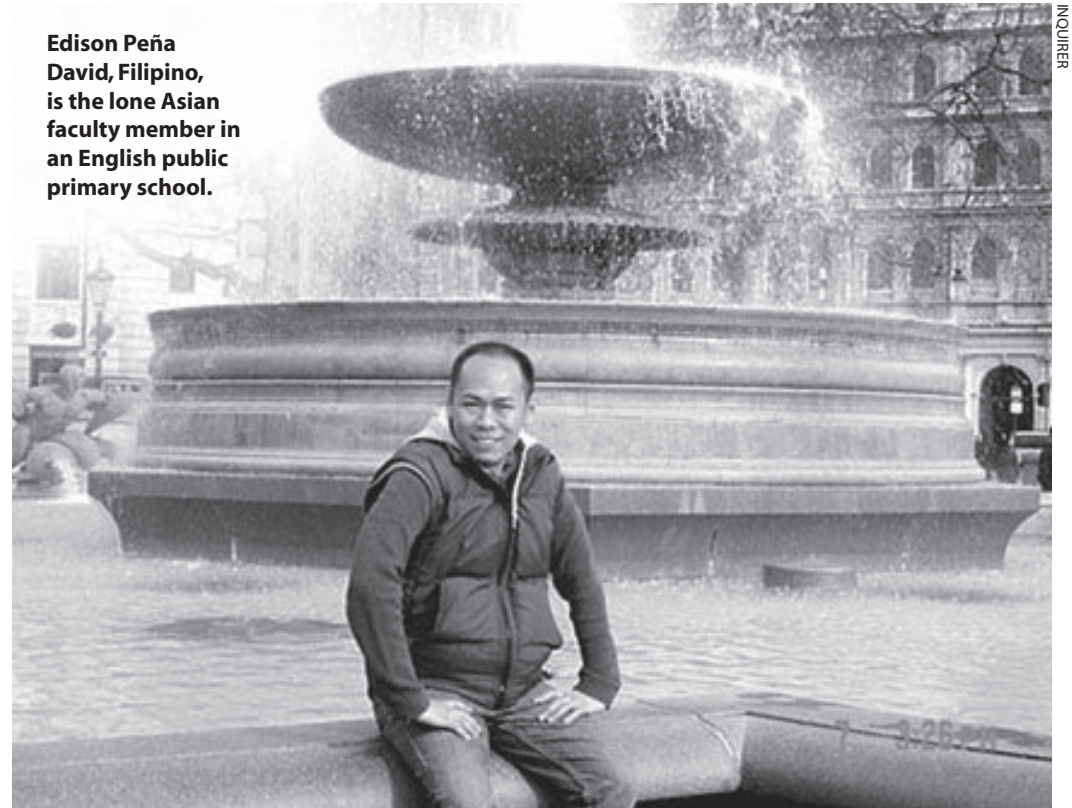
Such clarity of purpose and sense of system have earned David more than just a day-job at Vauxhall: He also heads the Math department, sits in a senior management team, and manages the school's database.

Aside from handling a typical class of 22 tots, David has been able to share his vision with fellow teachers and give colleagues "a pat on the back for a job well done" under the programs he has initiated. (He has apparently so endeared himself to peers that his head teacher then went with him for a holiday in the Philippines in 2005.)

Personalized training

Early this month, to further upgrade his methods, David finished a short course dubbed "Future Leaders for Future

Edison Peña David, Filipino, is the lone Asian faculty member in an English public primary school.



INQUIRER

Schools."

By his own account, David had helped improve the curriculum at Vauxhall, a state-funded primary school with a nursery, run by just around 25 teachers and staff, including mentors in French, Drama, Physical Education, and "special needs," as well as meal supervisors. Yearly enrollment is just around 240 pupils.

"I joined the school at a time when no clear systems existed (for teaching Math)," he recalled.

He remembered conducting a "subject audit," basically pinpointing what the children lacked in numerical skills. From there he drew up new teaching programs, "making sure that it is not just another burden or a duplication of something that already exists."

He also helped devise systems to better chart the pupils' progress, as well as to help the poorer performers catch up. "I now have a very strong view of the importance of personalized learning," he said, citing a recent initiative in UK education dubbed "Every Child Matters."

Last year, for example, he had a class where 80 percent of the pupils were underperforming. "Upon identification of these children, I implemented a number of intervention programs (sort of remedial sessions) to address whatever gaps they have in their learning. At the end of the year, most of them made enormous progress — my

school showed the best results compared to 16 other schools in those same circumstances."

It was no small feat, considering Vauxhall's classification under the British education system.

"It could have been easy for me to teach in a private school or a church-maintained school in London, where neither resources nor pupil behavior is a problem," he explained.

"Rewarding for the soul"

"But I chose to teach in a school where there is a very high level of deprivation. Almost 70 percent of the children in our school are on free meals or belong to families receiving state benefits. Mobility (movement of children from one school to another) and the percentage of children living with single parents are very high."

Here, he said, "is where I see the challenge: to be able to make a difference in the lives of these children... If that is not rewarding for the soul, then I don't know what is!"

David didn't know that his career would come to such inspired moments after some random Internet surfing in mid-2002. At the time, this Journalism graduate from the University of Sto. Tomas was already a Master Teacher II in a high school in Tarlac, married to another teacher, the former Maylah Reyes, and raising the first two of their three children (to-

day aged 8, 5, and 2).

"It was not a formal process," he recalled. "One day I was googling and I came across an agency called Protocol Teachers, which is based in Australia but facilitating teacher recruitment for the UK."

Industry in RP

He e-mailed one of the recruitment consultants and received immediate response. "After a few more e-mails and a phone conversation, she agreed to look for a school for me. She found one after a couple of days and began processing my work permit."

The whole process took about a month. David arrived in London in July 2002 and started teaching in September that same year.

"No two ways about it," he smiled, when asked how financially rewarding his UK stint has been. Without giving figures, David said his one-month salary here is already "equivalent to what I used to earn in two years." He had since been investing his earnings in the Philippines, mainly in real estate both in Tarlac and Metro Manila.

"But over and above all that, I think the professional development that I have gained from teaching here is absolutely enormous. At the end of each day, I find myself assessing my own performance against the standards I've seen here and the standards I set for myself."

Police chief, 2 other officers dismissed

By **OLIVER TEVES**
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Manila police chief and two of his officers will be removed from their posts in the fallout from a hostage standoff in which 26 children were held aboard a bus in the name of social reform, the interior secretary said.

Armando “Jun” Ducat Jr., owner of the 145-student Musmos Day Care Center in Manila’s Parola slum community, used the 10-hour, globally televised standoff Wednesday to demand better education and housing for poor children.

He and an accomplice were armed with two hand grenades, an Uzi rifle and a pistol.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno said police failed to control the crowd of onlookers near City Hall, allowed unauthorized people into the scene, and permitted contact between the hostage-takers and other people—including media—without proper clearance.

Senior Superintendent Danilo Abarzosa and two of his staff will be asked to step down for failing to follow proper procedures, Puno said.

Abarzosa said he has not received the order to step down, but “like a good public servant, I will follow my superiors.”

Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr., a friend of Ducat, went on the bus to help negotiate an end to the crisis. Ducat later surrendered to a provincial governor, but not until he railed against corruption and politicians’ failure to make good on promises to provide free education and housing for the poor.

Abarzosa said police later



Armando “Jun” Ducat, left, and Cesar Augustus Carbonell, the two men who held 26 children hostage on a bus but released them after a 10-hour standoff, talk to visitors inside their detention cell at the Manila Police Department Thursday March 29, 2007 in Manila, Philippines.

discovered the grenades did not have a detonator and would not have exploded, but that the guns and bullets were real.

Despite insurgencies in the country’s south and a high crime rate in the capital, the government has been trying to portray the Philippines as a safe destination for tourists and investors.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo ordered the two suspects to be treated “with the full force of the law” to prevent Ducat, who has a history of attention-grabbing stunts, from repeat-

ing his action and to serve as a warning to possible copycats.

“The end does not justify the means. Despite the seemingly noble issues being raised in this bizarre drama, this government shall not stand for prank-terrorism,” she said.

Ducat was unrepentant. “No, I don’t regret anything,” he told The Associated Press Television News from the Manila police jail. “The children’s wishes were fulfilled, all 145 children can now go to school all the way up to college.”

Ducat, a 56-year-old engineer, chartered the bus for a field trip at the end of the school year. Instead, he had the driver take them near City Hall where he announced he was taking the passengers hostage.

Arroyo treated the children, their parents and teachers to a different field trip—an audience at the presidential palace, where she served a snack of spaghetti with meatballs and spring rolls.

Sitting on a throw pillow on the carpet at the palace’s Heroes’ Hall, Arroyo chatted with

the children and posed with them for cameras.

The parents and their children expressed no ill will toward “Sir Ducat,” as they fondly called the man they said has provided free day care and paid for the teachers.

“My wish is that ... what Sir Ducat had worked so hard for be realized because we from the squatter area know the hardship he went through to help us poor people,” said Shiela Malabo, whose 7-year-old son, Fred, was among the hostages.

‘RP may miss goal to cut maternity deaths’

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippines needs to take urgent action or it might not reach a universal goal to reduce its maternity death rate by 75 percent by 2015, a U.N. official warned Wednesday.

Suneeta Mukherjee, the United Nations Population Fund representative in the Philippines, also said more than 400,000 abortions were recorded in the predominantly Roman Catholic country each year. She said many of those unwanted pregnancies could have been avoided if women had better access to reproductive health services and information.

Slashing the maternity death rate is among eight key U.N. Millennium Development Goals.

The U.N. estimates that the Philippines had a rate of 162 deaths for every 100,000 births in 2006, Mukherjee told reporters. It will be impossible for the Philippines to cut the rate down to a targeted 52 deaths by 2015 unless there is more high-level

political will, she said.

“In this day and age, no woman should die while giving birth,” she said, adding that the deaths were partly due to the lack of choices to control female fertility.

Promotion of family planning in areas with high birth rates would prevent up to 35 percent of all maternal deaths and 10 percent of childhood deaths, and cut poverty, Mukherjee said.

Population control is a touchy issue in this predominantly Roman Catholic country. Politicians often ignore it to avoid offending church leaders, who object to the use of artificial birth control.

The government’s policy is to make all birth control methods available, leaving it to parents to decide their family size within the context of their religious or cultural beliefs. Family planning advocates, however, say President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo’s administration has a bias for natural family planning methods.

Hostage crisis puts shabby RP education system in spotlight

By **HRVOJE HRANJSKI**
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The seizure of a busload of students on Wednesday by a man demanding better schooling and housing for children put a glaring spotlight on the Philippines’ deteriorating education system.

Overcrowded schools are using restrooms and hallways to accommodate a growing number of students, many of whom are failing to get even a basic education.

A recent national career assessment examination concluded that more than half of high-school students were unfit for further education. And the World Bank cited a 2003 study of trends in mathematics and science that ranked the Philippines in the lowest 10 percent of countries in both subjects.

The strains on schools—among the most congested in the world—apparently prompted hostage-taker Jun Ducat and at least one accomplice to seize 32 young children and two teachers from Ducat’s day-care center in a slum area to demand better education for them.

“They are pitiful if they cannot study. As you know, it is the duty of the government to educate the poor in the squatters’ area,” Ducat said in statements broadcast over radio. “So please support me in this. I love these kids.”

“The government has to understand. The politicians who are running in the elections need to understand the situation of the poor,” he said. “Many promises are not fulfilled.”

The Philippines once was acclaimed as a highly educated country, thanks to American missionaries and the U.S. colonial government that introduced the English-language and public education system after the turn of the last century.

But starting in the late 1980s, as late dictator Ferdinand Marcos’ martial law period drew to a close, the quality of education began declining, coupled with a deteriorating economic situation.

Millions of Filipinos started seeking jobs abroad, in part to finance their children’s education back home. Today, about 8 million expatriates send home more than US\$10 billion (€7.5 billion) annually.

Pacquiao now official Arroyo candidate

By **AQUILES ZONIO**
INQUIRER

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Boxer Manny Pacquiao officially filed his certificate of candidacy in absentia 1:40 p.m. Thursday at the Commission on Elections (Comelec) provincial office in Koronadal City, South Cotabato.

Pacquiao’s legal and financial adviser, Franklin Gacal Jr., signed the documents through the special power of attorney the famous boxer had executed before flying to the United States to train for his next fight.

Gacal told reporters that shortly before he entered the Comelec office, Pacquiao called him up and asked whether his COC had already been filed.

Gacal was accompanied by Pacquiao’s youngest brother Ruel, General Santos City mayoral aspirant Rosalita Nuñez and several supporters.

Gacal led a convoy of about 20 vehicles from General Santos City, where Nuñez and members of her slate earlier filed their COCs, to Koronadal City, 56 kilometers west of Gensan.

Pacquiao’s legal adviser claimed he was not

expecting that many supporters would join the convoy, adding that “I was just amazed by the spontaneous support shown by the people.”

After Gacal finished filing Pacman’s certificate of candidacy, he called the Filipino ring idol to inform him about it.

Gacal turned on his mobile phone’s speaker to let the reporters hear what Pacquiao would say.

In their conversation, Pacquiao told Gacal to just let the people know that what he was doing was the biggest sacrifice of his life.

“Ginagawa ko ito hindi para sa sarili ko kundi para sa kanila. Hindi sila magsisisi, gagawin ko ang lahat na makakaya ko para matulungan ang mga kababayan ko sa first district (South Cotabato) (I’m doing this not for myself but for them. They won’t regret this because I will do everything to help my town mates in the first district),” Pacquiao said.

Provincial Comelec officer Lilian Radam told reporters that Pacquiao was the second congressional candidate for the South Cotabato 1st congressional district to file his certificate of candidacy.



Pacquiao

PINOYSTYLE

Couldn't ask for more

By DOLLY ANNE CARVAJAL
INQUIRER

Gerald Anderson couldn't ask for anything more as he turns 18. Less than a year in the biz, he and Kim Chui are already much sought-after endorsers.

They are the new models of Glamlab fragrances—goes well with the sweet smell of their success.

But foul intrigues are part of the package, unfortunately.

Talk circulated recently that Gerald and his manager Jun Reyes had a falling out because of money.

Gerald clarifies: "I'm co-managed by Tito Jun and Star Magic. I owe them a lot so I won't let anything come between us, especially not money problems. Pera lang 'yun."

He spent some of his hard-earned money on his birthday celebration, which includes bringing goodies to cancer patients—which he intends to do yearly from now on. Kindness is a gift that Gerald was born with.

Diet plays warrior in new 'tele-epiko'

Taking Pinoy viewers to greater heights this April is ABS-CBN's ambitious tele-epiko, "Rounin." It boasts of technologically advanced animation and effects, unique plot, superb direction from Erik Matti and an all star-cast lead by Diether Ocampo.

Diether plays the master (Cadmus) who rules with wisdom, not force—very much like Diet in real life. The Rounin are the greatest warriors but love is their fiercest battle. What if like the Rounin, he has to choose between love and his vocation?

"Definitely love," replies Diet. "At the end of the day, I want to be able to share my accomplish-

ments—big or small—with my beloved."

Isn't he wary of the looming competition with GMA 7's "Lupin?" "I don't see it that way," he says. "I'm glad the industry is producing more quality projects. It proves that Pinoys can create a world-class TV series."

And Diet is truly in a class of his own.

Rehearsal?

After the success of "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo," Ryan Agoncillo is doing another movie about tying the knot. He top-bills Regal Entertainment's "My Kuya's Wedding" along with Maja Salvador, Jennylyn Mercado and Jason Abalos.

Ryan and Maja play orphaned siblings. When Ryan plans to marry Jen, Maja embarks on all sorts of schemes to stop the wedding.

What if this happens to him and Juday someday? Ryan replies, "I doubt anyone would interfere. But if anyone does, they can't make a dent in our plans even if they tried."

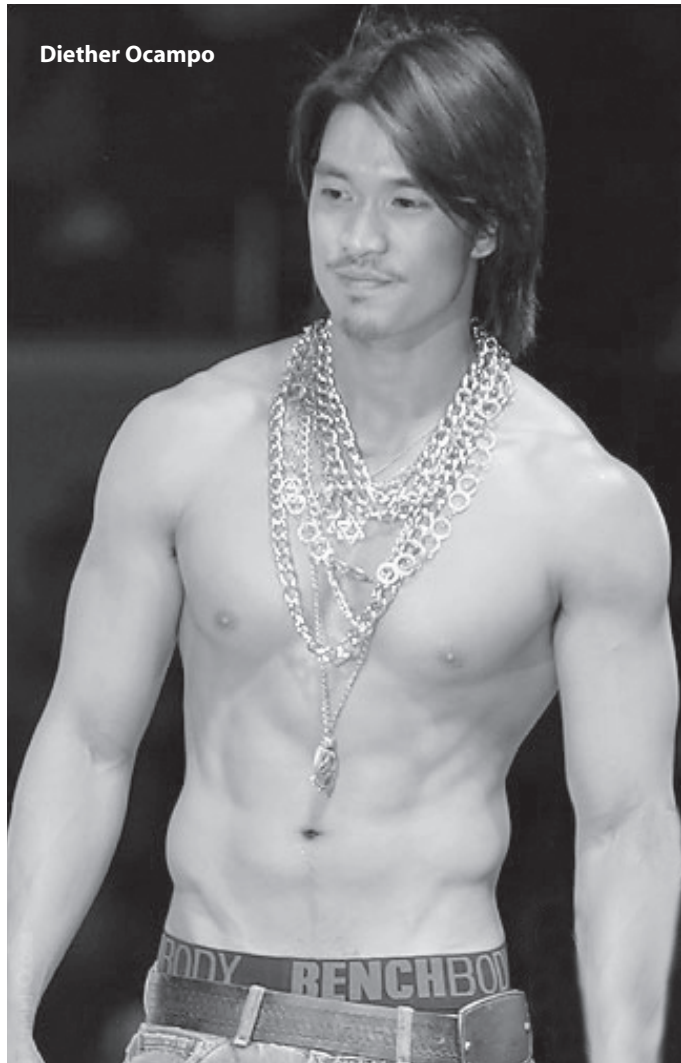
His wedding-themed films are sort of a "rehearsal" for him. "It has taught me that marriage is a union not only of two people but also of two families."

And what makes Juday good wife material? He smiles and says, "She's such a good soul."

Needless to say, that hooks Ryan's heart, body and mind for life!

Equal billing

I asked Jolina Magdangal's cool dad Tito Jun if he foresaw any billing problems with Jolens and Juday in their coming movie "Quija." He says, "We are not particular with billing but GMA Films assured us that it will be fair to both of them. Juday and

**Diether Ocampo**

Jolens call each other kumare. It's no big deal with them. Nakakaaliw that they tease each other kung sinong unang ikakasal sa kanila."

Why not a double wedding then?

Wish list

Cristine Reyes is elated that she's on top of FHM's wish list on cover girls. "How flattering!" she says. "Too bad my mom won't allow it—maybe in due time. I'm not ready yet."

What about love? Is she ready for it after her thwarted romance with Keempee de Leon and

Mark Lapid?

"Many guys ask me out but wala pa akong type."

Correct, girl! Collect, select and reject!

Family ad

Carmina Villaroel and her adorable twins Cassy and Mavy are lording it over TV ads.

The beaming mom says, "Zoren and I first ask the kids if they want to do a project. Then we ask for the story board and rehearse them at home. Good thing, director ang dad nila so natuturuan sila mag-project!"

She dreams of having an ad

with Zoren in it, too, "Para complete na ang casting. Happy family!" What if her ex, Rustom Padilla, is directing the commercial? "No prob!" Carmina says. Oh yeah! Past is past. Work is work.

Go easy, mom

During a shooting lull, Sarah Geronimo's co-stars coaxed her to jam with them in a sing-along booth. She was game but her mom said she should conserve her voice for a show the next day. That's a valid point, but mom should go easy on Sarah sometimes and let her have some fun.

Off to Japan

Rudy Fernandez proves he's made of sterner stuff as he battles the Big C. Aside from regular chemotherapy, Daboy will undergo radio-frequency ablation in Tokyo. Not too long ago—after his harrowing experience at Narita Airport with Alma Moreno—he vowed never to set foot there again. Hopefully, Japan's medical experts will be kinder to him than its airport authorities.

Time to court

Kris Bernal and Mart Escudero are "Starstruck's" Ultimate Loveteam. What happens now to Aljur Abrenica's (Ultimate Hunk) plan to formally court Kris? Aljur has been very vocal about his feelings. Kris seemed to enjoy being torn between the two guys during the elimination round. As my gay friend put it, "Feel na feel naman ni Kris na pinag-aagawan siya." We say to Kris: Don't let this divert your attention from the goal of the contest. Some "Starstruck" contenders make the contest seem like a BF/GF search more than anything.

'Slingo'

Mojo Pacific Media's "Slingo" is the newest, possibly the most thrilling, game show to hit local television. Aired Saturdays, 7 p.m. on ABC 5 and hosted by the inimitable Joey de Leon, it's patterned after the world's most popular casual online gaming format.

Studio contestants and home viewers have a chance to win cash and prizes by answering trivia questions.

Here's an interesting trivia about Tito Joey (whom I fondly call De Leon King). During his younger years, he was a DJ and my mom was station supervisor at DWWA.

One day, my mom wondered why Joey was not on the air and it was just music playing. So she popped up in the radio booth. Joey wasn't in. He was busy entertaining female guests outside. It prompted my mom to issue a memo to Joey.

That incident, according to him, taught him much about work discipline. I should say it paid off because ... well, look where Joey is right now.

He's really "De Leon King" of TV screens.

'Us Girls'

Studio 23's "Us Girls" (Sundays, 8:30 p.m.) marks its first anniversary this month. Hosted by Chesca Garcia, Iya Villania and Angel Aquino, the "kikay" show covers fashion, food, lifestyle, fitness, beauty and celebrity life.

They promise to have even more fab episodes as they kick off their second year, which includes a feature on Bangkok. Chesca turns all girly when asked about her marriage plans with her BF, cager Doug Kramer. She blushes. "We talk about it but I'm still waiting for him to formally propose."

Yeng Constantino on top of the world

By BAYANI SAN DIEGO JR.
INQUIRER

What a difference a year makes.

For 18-year-old singer-songwriter Yeng Constantino, it was a dizzying 180-degree turn.

Before she auditioned for the ABS-CBN reality show "Pinoy Dream Academy," Yeng and her family had faced eviction from their home in Montalban (now Rodriguez), Rizal.

"We had lived there for six years. That was where I grew up," she recounts.

She was seriously concerned for her family's future. "My father's salary (as assistant librarian in Ateneo de Manila

University) wasn't enough."

To help out, Yeng had quit school and joined the Morning Glory band. Her talent fee as lead vocalist was P250 a night. "If there was an acoustic gig, I earned a little more, P500. But even that wouldn't help us find a new house."

Then PDA beckoned.

Wearing her "lucky" blue Converse Chuck Taylors, Yeng took a tricycle and then an FX taxi from Montalban to the ABS-CBN studios in Quezon City.

"I didn't really expect to get in the show," she admits. In fast-forward motion, Yeng experienced a total reversal of fortune.

Part of her prize as PDA grand champ was a luxurious condo

unit, courtesy of Globe Asiatique, and a silver Suzuki APV.

"It would have been a cute, two-door Swift. But my ABS-CBN bosses suggested that a van would be more practical," she says.

The three-room, loft-type flat, which was recently given a makeover on the ABS-CBN lifestyle show "At Home Ka Dito," also proved helpful in her work.

She explains: "I do most of my songwriting in the bedroom, where it's relaxing. It also offers a beautiful view of Mandaluyong and Makati -- which is inspiring, especially at night."

Feels like she's on top of the world.

"For us Filipinos, owning a

house is a sign that life has improved," she notes. "Now, we no longer worry about where our next meal is coming from. It's a great feeling to know that I can help my family. My brother, who had to quit for a while, is back in Nursing school."

The 44 sq. m. unit is home to Yeng, her parents and brother. The rest of the clan is still living in the old house, pending the scheduled demolition which seems to have been put on hold because of the elections, she candidly says.

She dedicates her blessings to her parents.

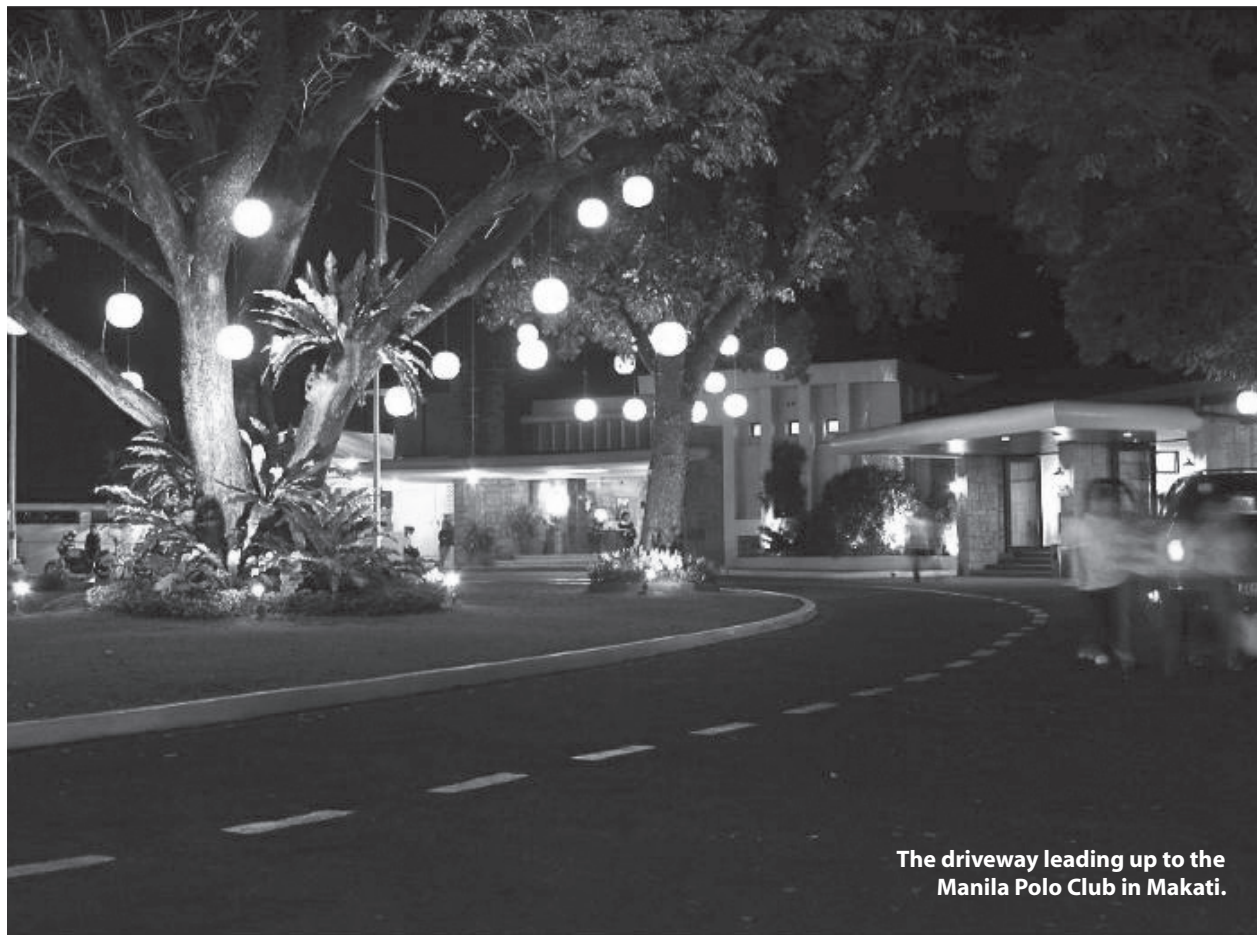
"My PDA medal and Metro Manila Film Fest trophy (for "Hawak Kamay," Best Theme

**INQUIRER****Citiscap inspires Yeng to write songs.**

Song) are displayed in my parents' room. I would've put my Gold and Platinum Record awards (for "Salamat") in their room, too, if there were enough

wall space," she says.

The Dreamer continues to dream: "My wish is for my family to someday move into a house and lot in the suburbs."



The driveway leading up to the Manila Polo Club in Makati.

A monumental legacy

By **AUGUSTO VILLALON**
INQUIRER

The Manila Polo Club in Makati, a heritage structure completed in 1950 by National Artist Pablo Antonio, was recently bestowed a marker by the Architectural Legacy of Philippine National Artists.

During the simple recognition ceremonies, architect Pablo Antonio Jr., representing the late National Artist's family, expressed his "profound gratitude to the officers and management of the Manila Polo Club for their tireless efforts in preserving this club."

Antonio Jr. echoed the rationale for the Architectural Legacy of Philippine National Artists program that seeks to recognize the unappreciated excellence of Philippine architecture while demonstrating that heritage structures built over 50 years ago deserve to continue living, to be reused and updated to render them more relevant to today's way of life, and that the original architectural design and character of the building should be maintained.

In recognition of greatness in Philippine architecture, four institutions are collaborating in the Architectural Legacy of Philippine National Artists program that documents the work of outstanding architects Juan Nakpil, Pablo Antonio, Leandro Locsin and Ildefonso Santos.

As a first phase of the program, commemorative markers are in the process of being installed in 12 surviving works of the National Artists for Architecture although full documentation has been completed for all National Artists' works.

The participating national institutions are the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

In the spirit of professional cooperation, the United Architects of the Philippines, together with the Philippine Institute of Architects, conceptualized the Philippine Architectural Archives Program, the basis of the present Architectural Legacy program.

Boysen Paints is the project's construction industry partner.

Nakpil, Antonio

Among the initial 12 structures are Quezon Institute in Quezon City (1938), Quezon Hall at UP Diliman (1950) and San Carlos Seminary in Makati (1953) by Juan Nakpil.

Juan Felipe Nakpil (1899-1986) was born in Quiapo, Manila. Son of musician Julio Nakpil (composer of Katipunan hymns) and Gregoria de Jesus (widow of Andres Bonifacio), he obtained his Diploma in Architecture from the Fontainebleau School of Fine Arts in Paris and received his Master in Architecture degree from Harvard University. He founded the Philippine Architects Society in 1933 and is considered the Dean of Filipino Architects.

He was the first architect named National Artist in 1973 "for his outstanding talents and services in creating edifices, both private and public, that are conceptually well-designed and conscientiously executed."

Works by Pablo Antonio to receive markers are the Far Eastern University campus in Manila (1938-50), White Cross Sanatorium in San Juan (1938) and the Manila Polo Club in Makati (1950).

Born in Binondo, Manila, Pablo Sebero Antonio (1902-75) began his architectural studies at Mapua Institute of Technology and completed his degree at University of London in 1927.

Clean lines, plain surfaces and bold rectangular masses characterize Antonio's buildings, a radical departure from the traditionalist and academic style of the period leading to his reputation as the foremost modernist architect of his time.

He was the second architect be-

stowed National Artist status (1976) "for his unique creations and distinct contribution to Philippine architecture and to the developing culture of the nation."

Leandro Locsin is honored for the Church of the Holy Sacrifice at UP Diliman (1955), the Church of Saint Andrew in Makati (1968) and the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City (1975).

Locsin, Santos

Leandro Valencia Locsin (1928-95), born in Silay, Negros Occidental, in 1928, completed his architecture studies at University of Santo Tomas in Manila.

As seen in his Cultural Center of the Philippines and Philippine International Convention Center, Locsin floats architectural volumes that capture the visual lightness characteristic of Philippine architecture.

His significant contributions in the search of Philippine identity in design led to his being proclaimed National Artist in 1990 in acknowledgement of "his triumph in combining in a forceful and dramatic fashion the precision of engineering technology with the principles of aesthetics."

Among the achievements of Ildefonso Santos awarded commemorative markers are the landscape architecture of Paco Park (1963) and "Martyrdom of Jose Rizal" at Rizal Park (1989).

Santos (1929-) was born in Malabon, Rizal, holds a BA in Architecture from University of Santo Tomas and University of Southern California.

He established the Philippine Association of Landscape Architects and headed the graduate program of tropical landscape architecture at University of the Philippines. He was elevated to National Artist in 2006 for his "work in the development of landscape architecture in the Philippines."

Feedback is welcome at pride.place@gmail.com

Pearl drivers

By **KITTY GO**
INQUIRER

ending in a gold pendant and three more dangling baroque pearls.

Three Filipino designs stood out among 700 global jewelry design entries at the Sixth International South Sea Pearl Jewellery Design Competition held in Hong Kong.

The annual competition is organized by the South Sea Pearl Consortium, a nonprofit organization created to educate jewelry designers, retailers and consumers on the special qualities of South Sea pearls.

The consortium classifies South Sea Pearls as those that range in color from white to champagne.

The awards ceremony was held at the Hong Kong Convention Center and was sponsored by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council.

Philippine design talent

Filipinos take pride in their design talent, but very few have consistently won design awards and even fewer have made a living out of design-driven jewelry. Knoi Esmene, Ivan Co and Fai Co are designers at Hoseki Jewelry Art (The Podium and SM Mall of Asia), a fine jewelry house that has been in business since 1996 and has consistently been winning South Sea Pearl design competitions since 1998. Hoseki means "precious jewel" in Japanese.

Esmene considers Hoseki owner and head designer Co his mentor. His "Phoenix Rising" garnered a bronze under the "Others" category, a division that encompasses nontraditional jewelry pieces such as the other winning entries of a hand Henna piece from Turkey and a shoulder and chest piece from Hong Kong.

Esmene's piece is what fashion industry lingo would classify as having "no hanger appeal," meaning it doesn't look good until you put it on. The dramatic piece, which took five months to make, is a choker of gold and oxidized sterling silver sprinkled with diamonds.

Suspended from this choker are eight pieces of baroque pearls. Peacock feathers anchor both ends of the choker while a trail of burgundy ostrich feathers curve around the torso

The believer

Owner and head designer Fai Co won a bronze award for his work "Fantasy" in the "Necklace and Pendant" category. Trained as an architect but raised in a family of pearl traders (today they own their own farms that supply pearls internationally and to their own shops), the senior Co is an active member of the Guild of Philippine Jewelers. He has not only won the South Sea Pearl Design competition three times but has had the honor of being one of 17 worldwide designers to be included in "White Magic," a 2005 exhibition organized by The South Sea Pearl Consortium. The exhibit, which has an accompanying book, traveled to New York (Cooper-Hewitt Museum), Dubai, Moscow, London (Royal Opera House), Milan, Nagoya, Sydney, Shanghai and Hong Kong.

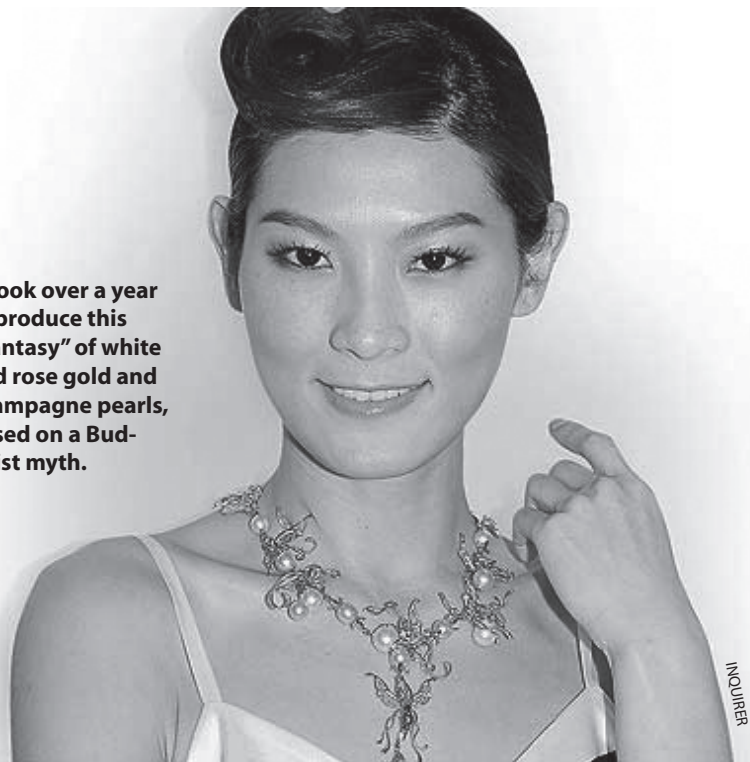
"Sarimanok," his dramatic necklace of gold, mother-of-pearl and teardrop baroque, was exhibited next to works by top names such as Tiffany, Henry Dunay, Stephen Webster, David Yurman.

"Fantasy," this year's labor of love, actually took a year and a half to make. The development of the design involved even more years than Co cares to remember. Inspired by the Buddhist myth of the seven goddesses, the necklace has seven intricately and individually carved fairies (no two have the same face!) of white and rose gold and 14 champagne-colored pearls from 10-12 mm.

Co is a staunch supporter of local design talent and jewelry as art and has had his share of criticism from more commercial and stone-driven jewelry retailers (those who base jewelry prices on intrinsic value of stones and gold settings) of the local Guild.

"I want to develop jewelry design in my business and through Guild competitions because I really believe that there is no future for us as jewelry subcontractors in the Philippines. We cannot compete on labor cost alone with China, Thailand and India. The Philippines cannot play this game but what we have is design. It is in our culture—furniture, architecture, textiles—and I have confidence in it for the future."

It took over a year to produce this "Fantasy" of white and rose gold and champagne pearls, based on a Buddhist myth.



INQUIRER

A long history of hostage-taking

The hostage-taking of 26 children, wards of a Tondo, Manila, day-care center, ended with their release unharmed after 10 hours of horror, but not before it riveted the attention of the world. The drama near Manila City Hall became part of a universal human experience played out before the eyes of millions in homes and places of work by TV cameras of the global networks of BBC, CNN, YouTube, and the Arabic TV station Al-Jazeera.

Although the episode shocked Filipinos as well as it did other citizens of the world, it was not entirely unexpected. The Philippines has a long history of hostage-taking, ranging from the kidnap for ransom of wealthy Chinese-Filipinos to the seizure in June 2001 of missionaries Martin and Gracia Burnham together with some Filipinos by the Abu Sayyaf in a tourist resort in Palawan.

What made the hostage-taking in Manila this week reprehensible and outrageous was that the victims were children, the most vulnerable and defenseless specie of the human race. Almost every day, mayhem takes place in Iraq, where terrorist attacks take a toll of foreign soldiers occupying that country and journalists and protagonists (between Shi’ites and Sunni militants) are being held and tortured. Only last Friday, Iranian forces seized 15 British naval personnel, including one woman, patrolling the Shatt-al-Arab waterway between Iran and Iraq. They were attached to the HMS Cornwall. Iran claims that the British had

strayed into Iranian waters, and the British insist that their sailors were kidnapped in Iraqi waters. The hostages are now being used as leverage by Iran to ease United Nations sanctions to halt Iran’s nuclear weapons development program. The seizure in the Persian Gulf has strategic geopolitical implications.

The Abu Sayyaf seized its hostages to send the political message that it was not a spent force in the Muslim separatist movement in Southern Philippines and, just as importantly, to extract ransom to sustain its terrorist actions.

In none of these situations were children victimized. The surest way to alienate broad support for a cause is to touch innocent children, the bottom line of uncivilized behavior in war or any conflict. Hostage-taking comes with different motivations, but the seizure of the 26 children by Armando Ducat, owner of the child care center in Parola, Tondo, had none of the burning motivations that drove Islamist terrorists to hijack aircraft to crash into the World Trade Center twin towers on Sept. 11, 2003. The Islamist terrorists of Osama bin-Laden bombed the towers, motivated by the desire to avenge centuries-old grievances and resentment against alleged Western wrongs on Islam, dating back to the Christian crusades of the 11th century.

The Manila episode was bizarre. Ducat painted the seizure of children, over which he had responsibility, with a veneer of idealism and civic conscience. In melodramatic fashion, he used the children as pawns

to call attention to so much corruption, and to grinding poverty. “While generations of politicians change, we continue to suffer in poverty,” he said. These politicians promise education, health and housing, he said, “but unless we stop corruption ... they will just feast on the budget.”

No matter the claims of a lofty purpose, Ducat’s action had the marks of aberrant behavior. Ducat has a history of staging stunts to grab attention.

He made the specific demand that his pupils receive “education up to college,” a demand that was met by the undertaking of Amable Aguiluz, head of a computer-training school, to provide the scholarships. In the end, the benefit was limited to Ducat’s pupils, not systemic in scope.

Since Ducat did not single out any politician for blame, the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration squeezed through the incident unscathed, except for the embarrassment caused by the fact that the incident broke out in the midst of a Publish Asia conference attended by publishers and editors of regional media, in which she had delivered the keynote speech.

Although the children escaped unharmed, taking them hostages to right social wrongs was terrorism no less outrageous and despicable than the violent attacks of Islamist extremists. Ducat wrote a note at-



Analysis
By **AMANDO DORONILA**
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

tached to a hand grenade saying, “Let the candles be a warning. If the promises remain unfulfilled, you will see those candles again.” He gave the note to Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis Singson, while putting the pin back on the grenade he was holding, before he surrendered.

His assistant was armed with a handgun, an Uzi automatic rifle and two grenades. Any of these weapons could have gone off if the police had been less prudent in handling the standoff.

Whether it was the 9/11 bombing, the Abu Sayyaf seizure or the Persian Gulf kidnapping of British sailors, all these actions had a single hallmark: they were meant to extract concessions at gunpoint. It was even worse in Manila. Wars tend to spread out its carnage across combatants and civilians, but only in rare cases have children been used as hostages. Only in the Philippines have children been picked to be used as pawns to leverage demands for reforms.

At the Publish Asia conference, a journalist from South India said he had not expected such an event to happen in the Philippines. “It’s more routine in the United States, which is full of crazies,” he explained. “He has to be mentally off. No sane man would do such a thing.”

It leads to surprises to discount such aberrations happening in the Philippines.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Political parties same as diploma mills

A political party is to the State what seminaries are to the Catholic Church. Just as the Church relies on seminaries to produce priests to man its pulpits and administer its parishes, the State draws from political parties the leaders and functionaries it needs to people its bureaucracy. That’s how it is supposed to be in a democracy. But not in our case.

Our political parties do not train leaders who propagate or uphold the democratic way of life, let alone advocate progressive platforms of government. Quite the contrary, our political parties field candidates with a knack for bastardizing democracy while turning the concept of a party system into a travesty.

If politics were an educational system, our parties would be the equivalent of diploma mills disguised as institutes that go through the motions of enrollment, then accredit under-trained and underachieving wards that cheat their way to graduation.

The failure of our politicians to establish parties that engage in honest-to-goodness political education, accredit worthy candidates and produce states-

men is the greatest shortfall in Philippine democracy. The wonder of it all is that the alleged party leaders, self-proclaimed or anointed by dubious characters like themselves, act out the pretense of being statesmen without the slightest embarrassment.

Unless and until we have parties worth their salt, our junketing politicians cannot stand alongside their foreign counterparts without underscoring the hypocrisy and pretentiousness of our system. Their stranglehold on power politics and the economy and their obsession with dynastic succession conspire to condemn generations of Filipinos and whole communities to squatter status in their own land, while driving others to seek meaningful citizenship in other societies.

Now a question arises: Given the dominance of these bogus parties, how can anyone expect Filipinos to take elections seriously?

Manuel E. Valdehuesa Jr.
Task Force for Good Governance
via e-mail

Can Arroyo eradicate hunger?

The hunger situation in the country is at its worst. According to the latest survey by the poll group Social Weather Stations, a record-high 19 percent of the population (or 17 million Filipinos) experienced involuntary hunger at least once in the last three months. In response, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the eradication of hunger in six months. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita “warned all concerned officials to shape up or be ready to ship out after six months.”

In the past six years that Arroyo has ruled the country, hunger and poverty have worsened (28 million or more Filipinos are poor). It was in 2004 that the hunger incidence hit double-digit

figures, right in the middle of the Arroyo regime. If Arroyo couldn’t free the poor from the grip of poverty in six years, how could she do it in six months? To achieve that goal (whether in six months or beyond), she must first shape up.

Does Ermita mean that if hunger is not eradicated by September 2007, Arroyo will, as the highest official of the land, be ready to ship out? Eradicating hunger is the responsibility of all government officials. As “concerned officials,” Ermita’s warning should include himself and Arroyo.

Martin N. Tanchuling
via e-mail

Name recall

Every time someone makes the mistake of introducing me as “Ambet Antonio,” I flinch. It is no joke to be confused with a man with a criminal record.

I used to think my professional name was quite unique and always laughed when, like Recah Trinidad, people who didn’t know me presumed that I was female. It must be the “h” but then some names like Bhoy or Bhen remain masculine despite the “h.”

When the news broke out that Ambet Antonio had shot someone, journalists, especially those on radio, had a field day playing with our names. To make matters worse, the Inquirer committed the same mistake. When I came to collect my mail, some of the editors laughed as they apologized. One even consoled me with the thought that I could run for public office simply because I had name recall.

When people go into the polling booth to vote next month, they will be provided with a ballot and a long list of official candidates from which they will draw a dozen senators. Looking at those names, the whole idea of name recall makes sense to me. Having a name with historical resonance, like Magsaysay on the 50th anniversary of Ramon Magsaysay’s death, should do the trick. This also explains why Teresita Aquino-Oreta and her nephew Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino had to sort out the issue of who would use the magic Aquino name.

To complicate things further, voters will also have to navigate through an even longer and very wordy list of party-list groups. Some months back, before the Commission on Elections declared Danton Remoto a nuisance candidate, a friend was convincing us to support the gay, lesbian and transgender party-list Ladlad. Then we were informed that a similar group was being formed carrying the brand name of a popular lollipop. In an alphabetical listing of parties, Ladlad could not have competed with a rude word that begins with “C.” So Ladlad added a word and became “Ang Ladlad.” Trust an English professor to come up with that solution.

The same strategy was used by Samahan ng mga Mangangalakal para sa Ikauunlad ng Local na Ekonomiya (SMILE), which would have been buried at the bottom. It renamed itself Ang Samahan ng mga Mangangalakal para sa Ikauunlad ng Local na Ekonomiya (A SMILE) and moved up significantly, but not enough to dislodge a transport coalition that would have been at the bottom of the list if they used United Transport Koalisyon, or UTAK, so it had to be renamed I-UTAK and it now heads the list of party-list groups.

More cunning were the AA-KASOSYO Party and Aangat Tayo (AT). Some people are indeed smarter than others. The teachers’ group formerly known as Advocates and Adherents of Social Justice for School Teachers and Allied Workers tried

to get ahead by calling themselves ABAKADA GURO, but only ended up fourth on the list. Five notches below this you have Advocacy for Teacher Empowerment Through Action Cooperation and Harmony Towards Educational Reforms (A TEACHER). How corny can one get?

If Abanse! Pinay rings a bell, what about Abante Ilongo? Or ABONO? I don’t know what marginalized group Abono represents, but if we go by its name, it can either mean fertilizer or those who advance money.

There is a group that calls itself Action for Dynamic Development (ADD) whose ranking was stolen by Action for Democracy and Development for the Tribal People (ADD-TRIBAL).

Then there are groups seeking to represent the handicapped like Advocates for Special Children and the Handicapped Movement (ASAHAN MO) and Alyansa ng may Kapansanang Pinoy (AKAPIN). If you need more hugs, you can try You Against Corruption and Poverty (YACAP), and if you want to fly, then try Youth League for Peace Advancement (LYPAD).

The above reminds me of other acronyms like: National Artist Award (NAAWA), which has, for obvious reasons, since been changed to NAAW; Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), the now dormant Cultural Research Association of the Philippines (CRAP), and artist Roberto Chabet’s University of the Philippines Fine Arts Running Team (FART).

Have you heard the story behind the naming of the theological school of the Jesuit-run Ateneo de Manila University? Jesuits have a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so the

school on the drawing board was originally called Sacred Heart Institute of Theology. But the acronym spelled something else, and thus was born the Loyola House of Studies (LHS).

Back to straightforward party-list groups: Alyansa ng Sambayanan Para sa Pagbabago (ASAP); Anak Mindanao (AMIN); Association of the Philippines Electric cooperatives (APEC); Democratic Independent Workers Association (DIWA); Koalisyon ng Katutubong Samahan ng Pilipinas (KASAPI); Pwersa ng Bayaning Atleta (PBA), and Hanay ng Aping Pinoy (HAPI). Then there are groups whose names have double meanings or sexual undertones like Barangay Association for National Advancement of Transparency (BANAT); Citizens Battle Against Corruption (CIBAC), Bagong Tao Movement (BTM), and Sandigang Maralita (SM).

There are different shades and meanings to these seemingly innocent party-list names, so much resonance in the names that I can only wonder what a future historian, armed with hindsight and perspective, will see and conclude about the interesting times we live in.

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu.



Looking Back
By **AMBETH OCAMPO**
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SAMU'T SARI

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



UFO OFFICERS

The newly-inducted officers of the United Filipino Organizations are joined by Philippine Consul General Wilfredo Maximo, seated third from left, after the swearing in ceremony held March 24, 2007, at the Aqua Resort Club. Seated second from left is new UFO president Ramon Awit.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



CONSULTATION MEETING

Officers and members of the United Filipino Organizations or UFO join U.S. deputy assistant secretary for insular affairs David Cohen, eighth from left, for a souvenir photo after the consultation meeting with the Filipino community on March 25 at the Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe. In that meeting, Cohen heard the concerns of the Filipino community relating to the proposed federalization of immigration in the Commonwealth.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Newly elected United Filipino Organizations president Ramon Awit shakes hand with U.S. deputy assistant secretary for insular affairs David Cohen soon after Cohen's consultation meeting with the Filipino community on March 25 at the Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

THE CHAMPION AND HIS STARS

Hairstyle and make-up artist Ren-Ren Santos of Genoveva Hair Power, center, is flanked by his models, Jordana Scheffler, left, and Cherlyn Gonzales soon after being declared the overall champion in the Hair Asia Vidal Sassoon Academy hair and make-up competition held March 5 at the World Trade Center along Roxas Boulevard in Metro Manila.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ren-Ren Santos is congratulated by his close friend, renowned fashion designer Gener Gozum, during the victory party held to celebrate Ren-Ren's win in the Hair Asia Vidal Sassoon Academy hair and make-up competition in Manila on March 5. Santos bested at least 1,000 hairstyle and make-up artists in the Philippines to win first place in both the Bridal and Commercial categories. Santos was also proclaimed the overall champion of the competition.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ren-Ren Santos poses for a souvenir picture with renowned make-up artist Patrick Rosas during the Hair Asia Vidal Sassoon Academy hair and make-up competition held March 5 in Manila.

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo waves to the crowd during the opening of the Hair Asia Vidal Sassoon Academy hair and make-up competition in Manila on March 5. Arroyo gave opening remarks to officially launch the competition.